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AUTHOR McAllister, Charlene
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ABSTRACT

Noting that it is important for parents and children to have fun as a family, this booklet offers parents ideas in how to make reading with their children easy and fun. The booklet discusses several topics concerning reading aloud to children, including helping children learn by reading aloud; having a special family reading time; finding books to read; using books to talk to children; and finding time to read. (RS)

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You Make it Happen for Your Family!

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A Read Aloud Guide for Parents

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You Make it Happen for Your Family: A Read Aloud Guide is a TAKE ACTION FOR EDUCATION project of Pacific Coast Public Television Association.

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Newspaper in Education Services/Parents: Partners in Reading Program.

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Adult Learning Disabilities Association
Adult Literacy Contact Centre
Glenayre Learning Centre
Great Pacific News
Learning Services For Adults
Vancouver Public Library

The material in this booklet was inspired by and based on ideas from many books and articles on reading, including:

"Read To Me: Raising Kids Who Love To Read" by Bernice E. Cullinan; "You Can Teach Your Child To Read" by Adrienne Katz; "The Read Aloud Handbook" by Jim Trelease; "Games For Reading: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Read" by Peggy Kaye; "Your Child Can Read and You Can Help" by Dr. Jane Ervin; "Family Focus: Reading and Learning Together" by The Vancouver Sun; "10 Ways to Help Your Children Become Better Readers" from the Center for the Study of Reading, "Barney & Friends: Watch, Play and Learn" by Mary Ann Dudko and Margie Larsen. Parents: Partners in Reading kit, compiled by The Vancouver Sun in conjunction with the Lower Mainland Council of the International Reading Association, the Greater Vancouver Library Federation and KCTS Channel 9.

Dear Parent,

Chances are you spend a lot of time every day working at being a parent. You cook, shop and clean for your family. You take your children to daycare or school. You might also work at jobs outside your home. Working at being a parent can keep you very busy indeed!

It is also important for you and your family to have fun together. This is what makes being a parent so rewarding. It is also a great way to show your children you love them. Spending time with your family, however, does not need to mean more work for you.

Sharing stories and reading can be a joyful way for your whole family to relax and enjoy being together!

Reading aloud to your children will also help them learn to read. Children who can read well do better in school. Reading is also an exciting, educational hobby that lasts a lifetime.

You are your children's first and best teacher. You do not need to be an expert at reading, storytelling or teaching to read aloud. You only need to make the time and make it fun.

This Read Aloud Guide offers you ideas on how to make reading together easy and fun for your whole family. We hope it will make you want to read aloud to your children of all ages often.

You CAN make it happen for your family!

Burnill F. Clark, *President*
Pacific Coast Public
Television Association

Justine Bizzocchi, *Director*
Pacific Coast Public
Television Association

Share the Joy: Read Aloud to Your Children.

Have you ever seen children hobble around in their parent's big shoes? This funny sight tells you something serious. Your children want to be just like you. They want to wear what you wear. They want to know what you know. They want to do what you do.
If you think reading is fun and worth doing, they will think so too.

No one else can fill your shoes!

- Show your enthusiasm. Let your children know you are interested in stories and books and interested in them.
- Make time to read together. Read a little or a lot every day.
- Read aloud to your baby. To your 8 year old. To your teen-ager.
- Read and tell stories in the language you are most comfortable speaking.
- Choose stories you and your children think you would like to read.
- Never force your children to read or listen. Reading is a pleasure.
- Talk together about the stories and the meaning of the words. Ask and answer questions about what you have read.
- Keep books and magazines in every room of your home.
- Read and look at books on your own. Your children will notice and want to copy you.
- If the story you are reading has people or animals who sing and dance, get up with your children and do this too.
- Play together. Keep it fun. Someone wrote: "**No one is too old to have a happy childhood.**" This includes parents. This includes you.

You Make it Happen **Together!**

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Reading Aloud Together Helps Your Children Learn.

When you read aloud to your children:

- they learn to listen, remember, understand and explain
- their imaginations grow
- they learn new words and where to use them
- they learn how to think and how to learn
- they discover whole new worlds and ways to be

Play is a child's work.

Children learn best at play. They also learn best with you. Here are some ways to make reading playful for both of you:

- Make the noises of storybook animals together. As you read, crow out loud or whisper as quietly as spider's feet.
- Young children like to hear nursery rhymes and play finger games like "**Eensie Weensie Spider**". Moving fingers help tell the story.
- Keep lots of crayons, paper and pens to play with around your home.
- Ask your children to draw pictures about the stories you read.
- Have a "**House Hunt**". Make word signs like BED, TABLE, BATH. Tape them to the things they spell and read the words together.
- Read newspapers, comics and joke books with older children.
- Solve riddles and do crossword puzzles together.
- When you read out loud, act up! Use funny voices for the characters.

You Make it Happen with a Giggle!

- When it stops being fun, take time for a tickle, a cuddle or a kiss.
- Play the "**Crazy Answer Game**". Ask questions like "Where does the sun go at night?". Tell your children to make up silly answers. The sillier the answer, the better the game!

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Read Together Everywhere!

Reading is not just something your family can do at home. Take books along and read together:

- in the park
- on the beach
- on holidays and camping trips
- riding in a car, a bus or a ferry

Talk, talk, talk and make up stories about what you see when you go out together.

Visit the library together. Some libraries have children's storytimes. The children join in the fun as the Children's Librarian reads and plays games with them. Parents need to stay with very young children. They need you to help them join in the games and to feel safe in a group.

Looking at books helps children settle in at the doctor's office or any other place where they must sit and wait awhile.

If it is too cold or rainy outside, build a reading tent in your living room. Snuggle up and read inside.

You Make it Happen **Inside and Out!**

Everyone Loves a Good Story!

- Babies love to hear the sound of your voice. Before they understand your words, they feel safe when you speak or sing softly to them. They also love it when you make funny noises.
- The more you talk, sing and read to your small children, the more quickly they will learn to talk.
- Children under 18 months like to look at books with simple, colourful pictures of objects they know.
- Pre-school children love to hear silly songs, stories and little poems that rhyme. They also love stories with happy endings.
- Small children like stories with words that sound like music and words that repeat. Remember the little train who puffed: "**I think I can, I think I can, I think I can**"?
- Two and three year olds love to listen to their favorite stories again and again. Good! This means they have started to love books.
- Children quickly learn their favorite stories. Soon they will "read" them to you from memory.
- When your children begin to learn letters or words, ask them to try to read them aloud. Point to the words as you both read them. Give them lots of time. Do not worry about mistakes. Teil them often how well they are doing.
- Read out loud to older children. They are never too old to learn from you or to need your love and attention.

You Make it Happen for Children of All Ages!

- Older children will enjoy read aloud time if you pick books or articles about things they like. Choose books together.
- Ask your older children to read on their own. If they complain "There's nothing to do!" suggest they read a book or write a story.
- Teenagers often love to act up and act out. Why not act out a good story with you? Take turns reading in the voices of the characters.
- Switch roles. Older children who like to do so make great "reading leaders". Invite teens to read aloud to you or to younger children.

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Have a Special Family Reading Time.

- Try to pick a regular time to read together. It might be every day or a couple of times a week - at bedtime or after breakfast.
- Some days you may spend only ten minutes reading. Other days you might spend fifteen or twenty minutes or even a half an hour.
- Choose a cozy spot to be your reading corner. Your family can curl up on the couch, a bed, or cuddle together on a blanket on the floor.
- If your children do not want to sit down and read with you at first, keep trying, but do not insist!
- Little children can not sit still for too long. Let them move around a little while you continue to read. They will be back again soon.
- Take turns reading. Children who are too young to read can pretend. They can look at the pictures in the book and make the story up.
- Use reading time to talk to your older children about books they have read on their own or at school.

Telling stories helps your family to know each other.

- Adults and children who can not read very well can still tell each other stories. Every family has a favorite funny or exciting tale!
- Talking about grandparents and other relatives helps you and your children feel closer as a family.

You Make it Happen from the Heart!

- When you talk about what you did and how you felt as a child, your children learn how to deal with their lives.
- When you listen to your children's stories, they learn to talk about how they feel and to share what happens to them with you.

Finding Books to Read.

Everything with words on it gives you and your children chances to practice reading aloud. You can read receipe cards, street signs and cereal boxes together. Read newspaper headlines or the words you see on T.V. game shows or in the commercials.

When you are choosing books:

- Ask your children what they love to do. Where do they love to go? What new people, places and things do they want to know more about?
- Look for books on these subjects together. Take a trip to the library or bookstore. Sometimes garage sales have used books.
- Ask the Children's Librarian for some of the many book lists which the library provides for free. These lists are often made up just for children of certain ages or on subjects children like to read about.
- Ask the Children's Librarian or the sales clerk where to find books for children of your family's ages.
- Choose books that both you and your children are able to read and understand. Books are written for all ages and reading levels.
- Some books have very large print. Others have many pictures and fewer words. You can add your story ideas to these picture books.
- Sometimes it may seem as if there are just too many good books to choose from. Ask the Librarian which books other children enjoy.
- Browse through the books together first. Look at the pictures. Guess what might happen in the story. Read them to find out.
- Children can understand many words and ideas before they can read them. Pick books that challenge your older children's reading skills.

You Make it Happen with Choices!

- A good book is exciting. A bad book is a bore. If you or your children begin a book and do not enjoy it, put it down and begin another.
- There are many books of lullabies and other children's songs. There are also picture-books based on songs. You and your child can sing along together as you look at the pictures.
- There many easy to read books for older children about famous people in sports and everyday people who live in other places. The library also has many wonderful children's cookbooks and books in other languages.

Good Stories are Everywhere!

- Children love to read books about things they see on T.V. Watch and talk about the programs together. Find books on these subjects.
- Many T.V. programs are based on stories from books. Ask your Librarian or bookstore clerk to help you find them.
- Your child's favorite T.V. character may also be shown in books, magazines and newspapers. You can get all of these reading materials at the library.
- If your teenagers watch nothing but music videos, check the library for magazines that talk about their favorite groups. Clip newspaper pictures and stories about the musicians. Put these clippings on a "News For You" display on the fridge door. Use magnets.
- You may want to limit the number of hours your children watch television. Help your children make choices about what they watch. Read the newspaper's TV listings together. Help your child choose a program you can watch together.

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

- Newspapers are a good place to find reading material. They do not cost very much and there are lots of things you can do with them together.
- Very young children enjoy looking and talking about the pictures and comics.
- School-age children like the newspaper's special spaces for young people. These columns have topics that interest children. They also include stories, riddles and poems written by children.

You Make it Happen with Imagination!

- Cut out and save newspaper stories and pictures about animals, weather, science, space, whales, celebrations, etc. These clippings can be used as a source for school work.
- Save receipes or make a note about events or movies you might want to go to.
- When you find something in the newspaper you think your children will be interested in, invite them to "read this".
- Cut and paste pictures from newspapers and magazines. Make up a story about these pictures. Write this story under the pictures.

Using Books to Talk to Children.

Children in storybooks get angry, sad, happy and afraid. They laugh and cry and fight with their family and friends. They get into trouble and do wonderful things too. Just like real children do.

- Talking about how the children in a story feel gives you a way to help your children understand and handle their own feelings.
- When you read out loud to your children, you are right there for them. Ask them what they think of the story. Listen carefully to them.
- If your children get scared while you are reading a story, talk about the difference between real life and make-believe.
- The choices and actions of storybook "heroes" and "bad people" help children think about the kind of people they want to become.
- Children often find it hard to talk about things that upset them. Stories help you talk together about subjects that may not be easy.

There are books on:

- going to the dentist or the hospital
- making friends
- the first day of school
- living in a new country
- alcoholism and divorce
- the death of a pet or a grandparent

If there is something you need to talk about with your children, but do not know how to begin, ask the Children's Librarian at your local library which books might be able to help you.

You Make it Happen with **Understanding!**

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Are You too Busy to Read?

On days when finding extra time to read is hard, you can help your children learn as you go about your daily routine. Ask them to:

- read the words on the milk carton
- sound out or write the words of your shopping list
- read the comics or your horoscopes in the newspaper out loud
- find the letters in your names on the signs inside the bus
- sing songs and say rhymes together as you cook dinner
- play "**I spy with my little eye**" as you both rake leaves or clean up the yard

Once your children can read and enjoy doing so, they will spend many quiet hours reading to themselves. (This can even give you some time to take a break!)

Finding time to read aloud to your children is one of the most important things you can ever do to help them learn.

If you do read aloud to your children, mom or dad, take a bow. You are doing a great job!

You Make it Happen for Your **Family!**

Pacific Coast Public Television Association welcomes your comments on *You Make it Happen for Your Family*. Please write and tell us if you found this booklet helpful.

We'd also love to hear from children too. What do you like about reading? What ways do you and your family enjoy stories and books and reading together? Write us a note or a letter. Send us a picture you have drawn or coloured yourself.

You Make it Happen for Your Family is a project of:

Pacific Coast Public Television Association
Suite 1300 - 666 Burrard Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6C 3J8

Telephone: (604) 685-7375.

Project Coordinator/Writer: Charlene McAllister
Outreach Coordinator/Editing: Dolly Rosen
Graphic Design: Lesa Moriarity

Children can learn more about books and reading by watching public television programs like **Sesame Street** and **Reading Rainbow**.

Adults in British Columbia who would like help to learn to read or write, can phone the **Adult Literacy Contact Centre** (toll-free) at: 1-800-663-1293.

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